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THE MENIL COLLECTION

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Ms. Robin Sweeney
EIS Document Manager, Office of National Transportation
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, U.S. Department of Energy
1551 Hillshire Drive, M/S 011
Las Vegas, NV 89134


Dear Ms. Sweeney:

Having just returned from a visit to Michael Heizer, considered to be one of the most outstanding artists of our times, and his Triple Aught Foundation Property in Garden Valley, Nevada, I must express my deep concern at what I learned of the current plans for this area.

Michael Heizer is internationally recognized as one of the pioneers of a new art form created in the 1960's known as "Land Art," "Earth Art," or "Environmental Art." In addition to being a significant natural treasure, the property in Garden Valley is also the site of Heizer's most ambitious project in this vein to date, an earthwork entitled "City," a monumental, and one of the most outstanding, modern sculptures ever undertaken. The project is now nearing completion, but has recently come under threat, not only by the proposed routing of the rail line that is planned to carry nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain, but also by the proposals of the Vidler Water Company to extract and transport water from Garden Valley.

The Nevada Great Basin valley was chosen by Heizer precisely because its remoteness afforded him the space to work directly in the landscape at a monumental scale; the silence and vast undisturbed environment is essential to the basic concept of the sculpture. In addition to the visual impacts, construction and operation of a rail line would destroy the prevailing silence that is essential to the experience of the work. In summation, these impacts would simply and virtually destroy the sculpture, a cultural resource of national and international importance.

The monumental size and the location of this sculpture in an untouched landscape in Nevada make this work particularly and uniquely American. The grandeur of "City" links contemporary American art with monumental sites of pre-Columbian art in ancient Mexico, Bolivia and Peru, as well as with American Indian tumuli in the Midwest. The very fact that the sculpture was located far away from civilization provides the sculpture with a profoundly timeless and otherworldly dimension. To endanger this unique work by developing a railroad line in such close proximity would not only compromise "City," it will, to an absolute certainty, garner serious negative national and international attention and severe criticism.



If another mode of transportation cannot be found, it is important that the DOE reconsider its plan to site the rail line through either Garden or Coal Valleys. I understand that tracks could follow alongside existing highways, and I would urge DOE to consider this route. Further, it is imperative that any future pipelines and well heads installed by Vidler Water Company or others used to extract and transport water do not disrupt either Valley.

I very much hope we can work together to ensure that this cultural landmark in Nevada can be fostered and protected.

Sincerely,



Josef Helfenstein
Director
The Menil Collection and Foundation

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